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An explanation of the More Effective Schools Program of 1964-65, the personnel and techniques used, and the problems encountered is presented. The project provides compensatory education for disadvantaged children by offering guidance and psychological services, subject and reading specialists, small classes, early childhood education, cultural experiences, and adequate materials and equipment.

Classes are limited to 15 children in nursery and kindergarten groups, and to 22 in higher grades. A team of four teachers is responsible for every three classes. Special teachers of art, science, speech, corrective reading, library, English language arts, music, and audiovisual aids are provided for each school, as well as three guidance counselors, one psychologist, and two social workers. An administrative assistant and assistant principals are assigned to each school. A community relations coordinator and social workers visit homes and work with parents. Efforts are being made to integrate the schools.

One problem encountered involves discipline factors inherent in moving groups of children through the halls. A solution is sought by moving the classes in a cluster to reduce hall traffic. Another potential problem stems from the nature of the class changes; teachers are unfamiliar with sharing the responsibility for a child's education.

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P.S. 138K - A MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL:

REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES - A HALF YEAR AFTERWARD

by

Rudolph Stein
Assistant Principal

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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The More Effective School is, in principle and concept, dedicated to the idea that all children should be given an equal opportunity to learn. It recognizes that large groups of children have not learned (achieved academically) as well as others, but that this lack of achievement is due, not to an inherent lack of ability, but to economic and cultural deprivations in the family and environment of the child. These deprivations have inhibited his growth to his fullest potential as a learner and as an achiever in the special milieu of the school. The function of the More Effective school is to operate as a compensatory instrumentality for the disadvantaged child by offering a wider variety of guidance and psychological services, additional subject and reading specialists, smaller classes, earlier schooling, adequate supplies, A.V. materials, cultural experiences, etc...

We are now at a point where we can make some preliminary and tentative assessments of the present status of the More Effective schools.

It is one thing to enunciate some general principles and to formulate a plan. It is another matter to implement it.

Some problems are inevitable. For example, we can't have children going to other classes without passing through the halls. This can be a source of disturbance and this is an objective fact. Other problems stem from the very nature of the change. The children are no longer in a self-contained classroom with only one teacher. The responsibility for their education is being shared by many teachers. This may create other problems. But in both cases it becomes futile to argue about these changes. We cannot have a More Effective school with specialists, or preparation and group planning periods, unless the children are taught by more than one teacher, and unless the children move through the halls.

Now, we must seek solutions. We move the classes in a cluster, closer to each other to reduce hall traffic. We share what we know about the children in planning sessions to improve the class work of all teachers. We make regulations that are reasonable and appropriate to the distracting hall situations and we must all enforce them. In this way we move from the problem to its solution, total or partial. Another source of criticism is that there are many people moving around many generals or captains. Again, when a staff is more than doubled to provide what amounts to a multiplicity of services and teachers (as compared to the regular school), there is going to be an increase in personnel. How else can the extra services be provided? This also creates problems. Is the work load divided equally? If not, as reasonable men and women, we strive for solutions, total or partial.

Another result is that there are more supervisors than before, and this may be another source of irritation. Teachers may feel that they are being "over-supervised." What can we do? We examine this situation as objective reality. We initiate solutions. We establish that a teacher has to deal with only one supervisor (except the principal, whose supervisory responsibility is general and encompassing). The immediate supervisor assesses the situation

or request and makes the moves and the referrals to other personnel only when it is appropriate and after he has cleared the initial stages.

But to point out situations where "over-supervision" exists, or where a division of supervisory responsibilities creates difficulties is one thing; to complain about supervision per se is entirely another matter. In the first case, we have a legitimate problem that requires our attention and we address ourselves to it. In the second case, we face a fundamental issue--how do we act towards or reconcile ourselves to supervision? All people must deal with supervision? All people must deal with supervisors in one form or another, a teacher with an assistant principal, an assistant principal with a principal, and a principal with his district superintendent. But how? This can be done on an immature level where the authority figure is a threatening or hostile force to be feared, distrusted, opposed; or it can be dealt with in a mature way where, realistically, one recognizes the administrative character of an organization that must function by these arrangements. One, therefore, does not have to fear or distrust it or oppose it for its own sake, but deal with it in a rational way. The means that disagreements may arise, differences may exist in such a relationship, that are subject to orderly discussion, agreements or arrangements. Ideal solutions may not always be possible. A decision may have to be made, and the person with the authority to make it does so after fully assessing all factors involved and assuming responsibility for the decision. But the decision is not an arbitrary or an irrational one. It certainly should not be such. And expressing freely one's own ideas and fighting for them freely and openly should not be threatening in any way whatsoever. It is only when one opposes hostilely that one compromises himself psychologically and hence, feels uneasy or threatened.

In our first year we have had, understandably enough, a great number of problems thrust upon us. We need not go into them. They are clear to us all. Concommitant with this, we have gone through a period of "gripping". Much of this is, of course, legitimate and has been alluded to. To these we have bent our energies in order to reach solutions. Some "gripping" will continue, again inevitably, and we should do everything we possibly can to reduce all legitimate complaints. But we must go beyond the stage of "gripping". We have been given an important assignment as a More Effective school. It may be possible for us to make a significant contribution. We may be able to demonstrate that a More Effective school can become a better and more effective instrument in teaching children, and in our own modest way, the world a little better place to live in. It would be tragic indeed that when given this opportunity, we do not exercise all our intelligence and energy to help this experiment succeed, but instead, permit the pathology of "griping" and cynicism to defeat us. One can only seriously doubt such an eventuality, since the very presence of a More Effective school is a statement of the faith of man that good sense and good will are stronger than their "opposing" numbers.

RS:vtd
4/6/65

Board of Education
City of New York
110 Livingston Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201

MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS PROGRAM 1964-65

This pilot program is designed to provide successful education for groups of children who need special assistance in reaching the level of academic achievement and personal development which will prepare them for success in life.

These schools must be staffed by teachers, supervisors, and other professional personnel who are embued with enthusiasm and a determination to help these young people to succeed. All who work with the children will recognize the fact that their intellectual abilities are the same as those of any other children and that with skillful and vigorous instruction, motivation, and guidance, they will succeed in school.

The schools will provide an abundance of professional personnel. Class registers in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten will be limited to a maximum of 15 pupils, in higher grades to 22. Four teachers working as a team will be responsible for every three classes. Teachers will have one unassigned preparation period each day. Each school will have special teachers of art, music, science, speech, corrective reading, library, English language arts (or non-English speaking coordinator) and audio-visual aids. There will be three guidance counselors, one psychologist, and two social workers in each school.

Each school will have an administrative assistant to help free the principal and assistant principals to work with the teachers to provide the best possible instructional program.

An intensive project to guide and help children with emotional problems will be provided in the junior guidance program. Thus, the regular class teacher will not be required to cope with a child whose emotional disturbances prevent the rest of the class from learning. The disturbed child, moreover, will be helped to adjust in a special setting.

This program is designed to strengthen the relationship between parents and the school. A community relations coordinator and the social workers will visit homes and set up a system of close communication with parents so that both teachers and parents can work together to educate children successfully.

Each of the schools will experiment with earlier school admission of some children. It is hoped that an intensive program of oral language and stimulating experiences with three and four year olds will improve the children's readiness for formal instruction in reading and writing. This program will be set up in cooperation with the Early Childhood Bureau of the Board of Education and with Dr. Deutsch's group from New York Medical College, and other agencies who are doing pioneer work in this field.

All local colleges and universities which are concerned with education will be asked to cooperate with the staff of the More Effective Schools. Volunteers will be asked to contribute special services in a variety of ways which will enrich the children's lives.

The need for such a special program is pressing. Thousands of young people of normal ability have been achieving less than normal skills in the early grades so that they are unable to master the work of the junior and senior high schools. Such pupils either drop out of school or fail to do well enough in school to succeed in today's employment market. The number of unskilled jobs available is diminishing. A mastery of basic academic skills is essential if today's children are to become self-sustaining citizens.

Every effort will be made to integrate these schools. It is hoped that the unusual educational opportunities offered will attract many parents to send their children from a distance to give their children a fine education in a naturally integrated situation. If this program is successful it may well set a pattern for the education of those urban children who because of conditions beyond their control have not been able to learn adequately in the present American school. Its success depends upon the recruitment of a fervent, optimistic, and highly skillful professional staff. Many people have volunteered to take part in this program. It is hoped that enough volunteers will transfer to these schools in September, 1964, to begin the program as quickly as possible.